NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

and

POETRY FOUNDATION

present

POETRY OUT LOUD

NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST ®

Poetry Out Loud in the Classroom

Participating teachers will receive everything they need to run a successful competition including a teacher's guide, copies of the *Poetry Out Loud* anthology, an audio guide to poetry recitation, and posters for the classroom. Additional resources available on the *Poetry Out Loud* website include video examples of excellent recitations, a guide for judges, a searchable anthology of more than 600 poems, downloadable scoresheets and a tallying system, and much more.

The curriculum for *Poetry Out Loud* has been designed to fit into a teacher's busy schedule. The program usually takes place over the span of two to three weeks, according to each teacher's interest and agenda, and it will not require full class periods during that time. Teachers may also work *Poetry Out Loud* into existing poetry units. To accommodate schools' testing demands and vacation calendars, *Poetry Out Loud* can be implemented at the school level any time during the fall through early winter, with slight variations by state. Please check with your State Coordinator for your state's specific calendar.

Poetry Out Loud satisfies most of the NCTE English Language Arts Standards. In addition to memorizing and performing great poems, students will have the opportunity to discuss poetry and—if the teacher wishes to use the supplemental lesson plans—to write poetry of their own.

Poems are the most beautiful and useful language.... By learning poems you really are keeping the very best of English expression and you have it to pull out when you need it.

—U.S. Poet Laureate Kay Ryan on the *Poetry Out Loud* audio guide.

Competition Structure and Prizes

Poetry Out Loud starts in the classroom, with participating teachers using the *Poetry Out Loud* toolkit to teach poetry recitation and run classroom competitions. Following a pyramid structure, classroom winners advance to a school-wide competition, then to a regional and/or state competition, and ultimately to the National Finals. State competitions will take place by mid-March; the 2009 National Finals will follow on April 26-28.

The following prizes are offered for the official state and national competitions:

State Finals prizes

Winner: $200, plus $500 to school library for purchase of poetry books, and all-expenses-paid trip (with an adult chaperone) to Washington, DC, to compete at the National Finals.

Runner-up: $100, plus $200 to school library for purchase of poetry books

National Finals prizes

National Champion: $20,000
Second Place: $10,000
Third Place: $5,000
Fourth-Twelfth Place: $1,000
Schools of top twelve: $500

PROFILES: THREE NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

2006 National Champion
JACKSON HILLE
Columbus, Ohio

Jackson was a senior at Columbus Alternative High School in Columbus, Ohio, when he was named the first National Champion of *Poetry Out Loud*. He is now at Otterbein College.

Recited:
"A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a Late Famous General" by Jonathan Swift
"Altruism" by Molly Peacock
"Forgetfulness" by Billy Collins

"Before the competition, poetry was strictly for bedtime stories for kids. I had never taken a poem seriously outside of a literature class before. It's something that I've come to love, and I'll incorporate it into whatever I do."

2007 National Champion
AMANDA FERNANDEZ
District of Columbia

Amanda was a senior at Duke Ellington School for the Arts in Washington, DC, when she won *Poetry Out Loud*. She is currently attending NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

Recited:
"Dulce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen
"Ma Rainey" by Sterling A. Brown
"Unknown Girl in a Maternity Ward" by Anne Sexton

"Every day I write poetry. In order to develop my writing and myself I have to read it and read about it."

2008 National Champion
SHAWNTAY HENRY
U.S. Virgin Islands

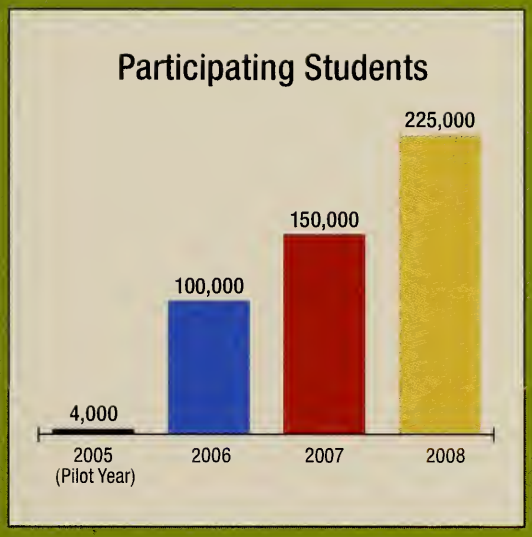
The youngest *Poetry Out Loud* National Champion, Shawntay won the 2008 National Finals as a sophomore. She attends Charlotte Amalie High School in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Recited:
"Beauty" by Tony Hoagland
"January, 1795" by Mary Robinson
"Frederick Douglass" by Robert E. Hayden

"When you really listen to the words and recite [poetry] on stage, it comes alive and you can feel that, and you have to make sure the audience feels that too."

Poetry Out Loud encourages the nation's youth to learn about great poetry through exploration, memorization, and performance. The inspiration for this program is to promote poetry in both the classroom and the community. *Poetry Out Loud* provides an entry point for many students to learn to love poetry and keep their favorite poems for a lifetime.

The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation joined together to create *Poetry Out Loud* in 2004 and now, in partnership with state arts agencies, dynamic poetry recitation competitions are taking place in classrooms across the country. *Poetry Out Loud* gives teachers the tools to introduce their students to a broad spectrum of poetry, so students may discover their literary heritage.



Poetry Out Loud has grown from a pilot project in Washington, DC, and Chicago to involve more than 200,000 students nationwide during the 2007-08 school year. Champions from 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands competed at the 2008 National Finals in Washington, DC. Prizes totaling more than $100,000 are awarded at the state and national competitions each year.

How To Be Part of *Poetry Out Loud*

To participate the official state and national competitions, schools must register with their State Coordinator. Visit "State Contacts" on the *Poetry Out Loud* website to identify your State Coordinator.

www.poetryoutloud.org

"This was easily one of the greatest experiences of my teaching career. Overall, we had approximately 850 (out of 1,000) students memorize a poem, from all levels, grades, and abilities. Our school semifinals included several ESL students, athletes, actors, honor-roll students, and students who struggle with their English grades. In the week leading up to the first round of the competition, students were reciting their poems in the halls, in science classes, at their after-school jobs, and to their parents at home. It was the level of intellectual confidence and enthusiasm that we as teachers usually only fantasize about."

—*Poetry Out Loud* Teacher

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Poetry Out Loud is a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, and the state arts agencies of the United States.

Photos by James Kegley